# Stress Test – Resolution 1

## Notes

#### Solvency advocates – Pretty good solvency advocates exist for NFU, Disarmament, and two legs of the triad – ICBMs and Bombers. There is no solvency evidence for the third leg of the triad, submarines. More work probably needs to be done for Disarm Affs as well, but there is a start for those.

#### DA Links – There are solid Assurances and Deterrence links for NFU and ICBMs. No DA links exist for Disarmament, Bombers or Submarines.

#### General Thoughts – Don’t think there will be a ton of squirrely Affs under this resolution. While I think there is a good start for the Aff and Neg, more work needs to be done for the Aff especially for the Triad and Disarmament planks.

## Solvency Advocates

### No First Use

#### Unilateral adoption of an NFU would logically establish doctrinal and operational changes. Consultation between allies would be the obvious consequence of a U.S. declaration. Such would increase conventional extended deterrence, preventing a decline in military capabilities, as well as create a political space for Russia to follow suit, through a unified policy which is a necessary first step to resolve alternative concerns. That solves the AFF’s follow-on and credibility internal links.

Tannenwald 19 (**Nina Tannenwald**, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science @ Brown University, 8-1-2019, "It’s Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Review – Vol 2, Issue 3, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/, accessed 4-26-2023)

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 already 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 extended 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 agreement 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. administration 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.

#### This evidence directly answers most NEG warrants that indict an NFU, and cements than an NFU would establish U.S. credibility related to non-proliferation.

Tannenwald 19 (**Nina Tannenwald**, Senior Lecturer in the Department of Political Science @ Brown University, 8-1-2019, "It’s Time for a U.S. No-First-Use Nuclear Policy," Texas National Security Review – Vol 2, Issue 3, https://tnsr.org/roundtable/its-time-for-a-u-s-no-first-use-nuclear-policy/, accessed 4-26-2023)

A second theoretical perspective, “liberal institutionalism,” emphasizes the role of rules and institutions, both domestic and international, in stabilizing 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 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 requirements 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, repudiated 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 institutions to prevent nuclear war. They argue that NFU has become 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.10

Finally, constructivists, who focus on the role of norms, identity, and discourse, emphasize 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 irresponsible 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 irresponsible 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.

#### There are advocates for NFU who take the Ukraine war into account.

Manpreet Sethi 22, Distinguished Fellow at the Centre for Air Power Studies (CAPS), New Delhi, has been leading the project on Nuclear Security at the Centre for the last 20 years, “Nuclear Overtones in the Russia-Ukraine War,” Arms Control Today, vol. 52, no. 5, Arms Control Association, 06/2022, pp. 12–15

Nuclear weapons today occupy center stage in an unexpected theater in Europe. The conflict between Russia and Ukraine has drawn attention to these weapons of mass destruction and the alarming possibility of their use in a manner that had mostly been forgotten. When the Cold War ended more than three decades ago, it was not anticipated that the threat of nuclear weapons use would make such a comeback. South Asia and the Korean peninsula were considered the more likely nuclear flashpoints, not Europe.

More than two months have elapsed since the start of the conflict. Although the actual fighting is taking place between nuclear-armed Russia and non-nuclear Ukraine, the threatening shadow of the nuclear weapons possessed by the United States and NATO is palpable. Since the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, this is the first real engagement between the United States and Russia where they are indirectly yet directly involved. Millions of lives have been disrupted, and several thousand people have died. This is an irreparable and inconsolable human loss.

There also will be long-lasting implications for states, whether possessing nuclear weapons or not, as to how these capabilities are perceived in the future. This experience has created profound nuclear challenges, but also offers some opportunities for reducing nuclear risks.

Nuclear Challenges

One immediate concern is the manner in which nuclear Russia has used force against non-nuclear Ukraine. A popular view emerging internationally is that Russia exploited its nuclear status to invade its neighbor and that its nuclear weapons, in effect, gave it the immunity to wage a war against a non-nuclear-weapon state.

This perception raises the stock value of nuclear weapons and could lead a nonnuclear-weapon state to reexamine its security requirements, especially when it experiences hostile relations with countries that possess nuclear weapons. It will have implications for how a non-nuclear-weapon state evaluates the worth of negative security assurances provided to it by the nuclear-weapon states. Despite such assurances being made to Ukraine in the 1994 Budapest Memorandum by the United States, the United Kingdom, and Russia, for instance, Russia has used the threat of the potential use of nuclear weapons as a way to deter Ukraine from soliciting and receiving outside support. This episode raises the possibility of similar instances of nuclear coercion against additional non-nuclear-weapon states, which, in turn, could lead these states to acquire their own nuclear weapons to fend off nuclear-armed adversaries.

A second challenge arises from the heightened risks of nuclear use when two nuclear-armed states engage in conventional war with each other. During the Cold War, it was generally assumed that, in case of a direct conflict between two countries with nuclear weapons, presumably the United States and the Soviet Union, the fighting would turn quickly into a nuclear exchange. As a result, the planning process in both countries shifted to the realm of nuclear war-fighting. The size and structure of the U.S. and Russian nuclear forces, targeting strategies, and civil defense measures were constructed with the inevitability of a nuclear war in mind. Little attention was paid to containing a war at the conventional level.

Fortunately, incidents of direct military engagement between nuclear-armed states were few. The only direct conflict during the Cold War between the Soviet Union and the United States took place in 1962 over Cuba, and a direct military clash between the Soviet Union and China took place over the Ussuri River in 1969. All other confrontations between nuclear superpowers were fought through their proxies in third countries that were themselves non-nuclear. This record, not surprisingly, reinforced the thinking among scholars and political leaders that nuclear deterrence averts war between nuclear-armed nations. Tomes have been written about how the presence of nuclear weapons induces nations to be prudent and to establish "tools for crisis management to reduce the prospect of the outbreak of unintended warfare, either nuclear or conventional."1 Such a belief is also responsible for the positive spin around nuclear weapons as keepers of stability and peace between nucleararmed nations and hence against the case for nuclear disarmament.

Interest and concern about the possibility of conventional wars that could be fought between nucleararmed states picked up after India and Pakistan tested nuclear weapons in 1998. Given their historically troubled relationship and geographical contiguity, the possibility of conventional war within this nuclear shadow presented a significant new challenge. The West rushed to provide Islamabad and New Delhi with "nuclear learning" from its experience. Over the years, India and Pakistan have found ways of navigating the narrow space of conventional military operations against the backdrop of their nuclear weapons. Nevertheless, the risk of escalation can never be obviated.

The experience of Southern Asia, a term used to define the nuclear dynamics among China, India and Pakistan, underscores that when caught in a direct confrontation, nuclear-armed states, irrespective of their doctrine or apparent nuclear bluster, are cognizant of the consequences of intentional use and the risks of inadvertent use of nuclear weapons. Therefore, leaders take conscious measures to avoid risks and are forced to do two things: show high tolerance for their adversary's military and political actions, and moderate the use of their own military capability to remain below the other side's perceived nuclear threshold. A former Indian defense minister made this observation after the nuclearization of South Asia: "Nuclear weapons did not make war obsolete; they simply imposed another dimension on the way warfare was conducted.... [Conventional war remained feasible, though with definite limitations, if escalation across the nuclear threshold was to be avoided."2 As history has shown, nuclear-armed states of all hues are compelled to impose constraints on the use of their conventional military forces to avert raising the level of the crisis.

When India fought the war with Pakistan in 1999 over the Kargil district that had been clandestinely occupied by Pakistani army troops disguised as mujahideen, the Indian Air Force was instructed to operate without crossing the Line of Control, which divides the Indian- and Pakistani-controlled parts of Kashmir. Air operations to evict the intruders were conducted in a constrained space in order to avoid any chance of provoking Pakistan into expanding the conflict, thereby risking nuclear escalation. In more recent times, India's response to continued cross-border attacks from Pakistan have taken the form of short, swift surgical strikes, as in 2016, or carefully calibrated air attacks, as in 2019. These operations have been crafted by India to punish without exploiting the full force of its conventional military capabilities. Pakistan's retaliatory attacks also appear to have been prudently tailored to keep escalation in check.3

A similar pattern seems to be emerging in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, where in order to steer clear of the specter of nuclear escalation, both sides are moderating their military actions. The United States and NATO have refrained from undertaking any overtly provocative actions. The Ukrainian demand for help in imposing a no-fly zone has been rejected. The United States cancelled a scheduled test of an intercontinental ballistic missile and refused to raise the alert levels of its nuclear forces despite Russian President Vladimir Putin's threats and order to put his nuclear forces on somewhat higher alert. The objective of these Western efforts has been to avoid any action that could be misread by Moscow as a provocation.

Meanwhile, Russia has had to tolerate a certain level of arms and ammunition transfers to Ukraine. Even a strategic blow such as the sinking of the Russian flagship Moskva or reported high casualties among Russian troops have been absorbed. Despite the nuclear brinksmanship suggested when Putin threatened consequences "such as you have never seen in your entire history," concerns about the use of nuclear weapons to redeem losses on the ground appear farfetched. This is true even though the Russian leadership has not hesitated to draw attention repeatedly to nuclear weapons, whether by testing a Sarmat missile on April 20 or reiterating the threat of "unpredictable consequences" if heavy arms were supplied to Ukraine by Western powers. Indeed, keeping the nuclear threat in the news is part of the Kremlin's nuclear strategy of deterrence.

As it appears now, the war could progress in slow motion indefinitely until both sides can find an off-ramp that allows them to avoid the appearance of defeat, or the war could "break out of the boundaries that have currently kept it contained."4 More often than not, outright victories and defeats are difficult to ascertain in such conflicts. Nations are forced to tailor their political-military objectives along more and more limited lines as the conflict stretches on. In fact, the success of military campaigns is claimed more frequently in the individual narratives articulated by each side rather than on the ground. IndianPakistani military engagements since 1998 illustrate these facts.

The challenge remains that when two nuclear-armed states engage in conflict, they have the capacity to hold the world hostage to nuclear destruction. Executing conventional wars in the shadow of nuclear arsenals may be possible, but it is not devoid of high risks.

Norm-Affirming Opportunities

Incidences of direct military engagement between nuclear-armed adversaries and the manner in which they have been conducted also illuminate another interesting issue pertaining to the perceived military utility of nuclear weapons. Nuclear strategists and practitioners understand well that nuclear deterrence is a game of psychological manipulation. Nuclear bluster and brinkmanship are an important dimension of nuclear deterrence, especially by weaker conventional powers. Like Pakistan or North Korea, Russia appears to have used nuclear saber-rattling to deter its adversary from the large-scale use of conventional forces. Despite all the noise that must accompany strategies of first use of nuclear weapons or those premised on the notion of "escalate to deescalate," it is never easy to find the appropriate military use for nuclear weapons. The nature of the armament as a weapon of mass destruction and the attendant risk of retaliation after first use make it a blunt instrument, at least from the point of view of war-fighting.

Therefore, in all crises between nuclear-armed states, nuclear weapons have not shown themselves to be useful for achieving any worthwhile political or military objectives through premeditated first use. This is particularly the case when both sides have assured secondstrike capabilities, thereby raising the risk of an exchange that would cause unacceptable damage to both sides.

Once this logic is understood, it is possible to envision some opportunities that can be exploited to strengthen the norm of nonuse of nuclear weapons and reinforce the basics of nuclear deterrence. What needs to be underscored is the fact that nuclear weapons are distinct from conventional weapons. The instantaneous release of large amounts of energy in the form of blast and thermal heat, ionizing radiation, and the long-term radioactivity from nuclear fallout are unavoidable with nuclear detonations.5 The empirical data from the destruction wrought on Hiroshima and Nagasaki by, respectively, 15-kiloton and 20-kiloton nuclear warheads are widely available. Today's warheads are even more powerful and destructive. Although lower yields have been experimented with as one way of reducing the deleterious effects of nuclear explosions, a 2001 report concluded that even a ground burst of a nuclear yield as small as 1 percent of the Hiroshima weapon would "simply blow out a massive crater of radioactive dirt, which rains down on the local region with especially intense and deadly fallout."6

Given that this is the true nature of the weapon, there hardly can be any credible scenarios where it could be used effectively to achieve an objective. Could any war aim be worth this cost to the adversary and to one's own self given the retaliation that would likely follow? Over time, Washington and Moscow accumulated large stockpiles of varying yields in the hope of gaining an advantage in nuclear exchanges. Yet, neither country has been seriously inclined to test this hypothesis in real-life situations.

Nations cannot defend themselves by using nuclear weapons. They can only do so by deterring the adversary's use of a nuclear weapon by the threat of retaliation. In fact, the threat of using these weapons in any scenario other than retaliation, such as against terrorists, conventional offensives, and cyberattacks or space attacks, could only be counterproductive by escalating hostilities. Clearly, these weapons are most effective for only a narrow role.

Embracing this simple reality could make it possible for nations to agree to accept no first use of nuclear weapons as a doctrinal precept. If deterrence is the only function that nuclear weapons can credibly perform, then a no-first-use doctrine does not put nuclear-armed states at a disadvantage. Rather, it brings many benefits. For one, it allows countries to retain their nuclear weapons for the sense of notional security derived from their presence until such time as nucleararmed states begin to see them as useless. At the same time, the no-first-use policy liberates nations from the need to build and maintain large arsenals with firststrike capabilities, which bring their own risks of safety and security.

Moreover, the policy releases national leaders from having to make the momentous decision to breach the nuclear taboo, which can never be easy because the act will provoke retaliation. It also frees adversaries from the use-itor-lose-it dilemma, which could trigger nuclear preemption. Thus, a no-first-use policy offers crisis and arms race stability even in the presence of nuclear weapons.7 Because nuclear weapons possessors are unwilling to relinquish their arsenals until conditions are "right," a no-first-use policy can help create those conditions by constricting possibilities for using the weapon, thus making them useless over time.

Backing Off the Nuclear Precipice

Six decades after the Cuban missile crisis, the Russian-Ukrainian war has brought nations yet again to the nuclear precipice. Talk of World War III is in the air. Of course, the United States and NATO have taken adequate precautions to avoid any move that could propel the world toward nuclear escalation. Some Russian ministers have announced that their country has no reason to use nuclear weapons except to defend against an existential threat. These efforts contribute toward minimizing the chance of intentional nuclear use. Nevertheless, the inadvertent use of the weapons due to miscalculation, misperception, or accident should not be overlooked. Given that tensions are high and information warfare well in progress, one cannot dismiss the presence of a thick fog of war that could make countries stumble into nuclear use.

As a result, it is imperative that this moment be seized by all those who believe that living with nuclear weapons is too risky to drive home the dangers of nuclear weapons and the alarming challenges that they pose for states with nuclear weapons and those without. The very existence of these armaments adds to the risk of escalation to the nuclear level in every war. Additionally, these weapons trigger anxieties about nuclear blackmail and coercion among nonpossessor states.

The war raging in Ukraine offers an important opportunity to sensitize nations and their populations to nuclear risks. All could do with a stiff dose of nuclear learning. The fate of future generations will rest on the world's behavior today.

### Disarmament

#### Attempts at nuclear deterrence fails but does destabilize the globe, abolition is a far better policy and allows policymakers to rebalance over security threats that matter.

Doyle 13 – Two decades working at the Los Alamos National Laboratory (LANL) on nonproliferation.

James Doyle, January 31 2013, “Why Eliminate Nuclear Weapons?” Global Politics and Strategy, https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402

It appears that the war scare that culminated with Able Archer 83 was a case of mutual intelligence failure and leadership misperception, shortcomings that remain all too frequent in the post-Cold War era. The fact that it happened 33 years after the beginning of a nuclear deterrent relationship between the United States and Soviet Union and brought the chance of nuclear war closer than at any time since the Cuban Missile Crisis is evidence against the so-called benefits of nuclear deterrence on national decision-making. What if there are no such benefits? What if nuclear-armed nations are just as prone to stumbling into war or choosing to use military force as they were prior to the acquisition of nuclear weapons? The fundamental difference then would be the magnitude of risk carried by states that choose to rely on nuclear deterrence. If deterrence fails, millions, or even hundreds of millions of civilians can be killed in less than a day. Without nuclear weapons the consequences of military conflict, even between great powers, would not be nearly as severe. Sustained use of conventional weapons can be devastating, and nuclear weapons could eventually be reconstituted and used, but the time needed for either to happen at least presents an opportunity to end hostilities before cities are destroyed.

Nuclear weapons also inhibit the development of positive relations between former rivals, as the unsteady progress in the development of positive US–Russian relations since the end of the Cold War demonstrates. How deeply can two nations engage as partners while still proclaiming the capability and willingness to destroy one another, just in case? To be sure, sources of tension other than opposing nuclear forces exist in the US–Russian relationship, but fundamental change would be needed in the area of nuclear strategy before a true partnership could be established. In the years ahead, the value of a true security partnership with Russia and China for both the United States and Europe is likely to be very high indeed.

The force is too big

Current US nuclear posture with respect to Russia seems to be completely out of step with declared policy. In 1994, Russia and the United States reached a bilateral de-targeting agreement which stated that ‘for the first time since the dawn of the nuclear age – Russia and United States will not operate nuclear forces, day-to-day, in a manner that presumes they are adversaries’.[Footnote22](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) But if Russia is not presumed to be a potential adversary, three fundamental features of the current US nuclear force structure and operating posture make little sense.

Firstly, the force is too big. Without the need to target Russia's strategic forces there simply are not enough plausible aim-points in the world for US nuclear weapons that would require 1,500–2,000 operationally deployed warheads. For example, in an extreme crisis, perhaps 50–100 nuclear weapons at most would be needed to threaten devastation on Iran, North Korea or China. Only Russia's large and dispersed nuclear force has historically justified US forces totalling thousands of nuclear weapons. Secondly, there would be no need for alerted weapons. No country other than Russia has the capability to pre-empt the launch of US forces by destroying a significant portion of them on the ground. Thirdly, US nuclear weapons would not need the operational capability (in terms of accuracy and destructive yield) to limit damage to the United States by destroying Russian nuclear weapons at their protected bases before they could be launched.

The inability of the United States and Russia to make more rapid progress on reducing nuclear weapons and increasing transparency regarding the roles and missions of remaining weapons has created a source of continued misperception and mistrust. America's maintenance of large alerted nuclear forces, even as it develops strategic missile defences, naturally leads Russia to question America's strategic intentions. Russia's retention of thousands of older non-strategic nuclear weapons raises similar suspicions among the NATO Allies. Given the generally positive nature of the US–Russian relationship, the continued competitive mutual nuclear entanglement hinders the development of truly normalised relations. For example, there is no compelling reason why US and Russian nuclear forces could not be safely decoupled, with each nation building down to their own strategic comfort level. The resulting asymmetries need not create instability as long as the political relationship remains positive.

The problem is that much of the US strategic community continues to perceive Russia as a potential adversary, despite pronouncements to the contrary. This limits their willingness to reduce US nuclear counterforce or damaging-limitation capabilities vis-à-vis Russian strategic forces and causes them to advocate the maintenance of numerically large US forces capable of prompt attacks. Those who support the maintenance of large, accurate, prompt-use nuclear forces claim that they are necessary as a hedge against the possibility of a resurgent hostile Russia. However, recent studies by the Department of Defense conclude that, even if Russia did turn adversarial and increase its nuclear forces in excess of US totals, the survivable capabilities of US forces would continue to provide the ability to answer a Russian attack with a devastating response.[Footnote23](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) The Pentagon's new national security strategy document asserts that the United States can meet all its deterrent goals with respect to the full range of potential adversaries with a smaller nuclear arsenal than it now possesses.[Footnote24](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402)

The continued reliance on large nuclear forces and Cold War-style nuclear deterrence has many costs. There is the cost in terms of hindering positive development of relations with Russia and China. The very risk of deterrence failure and the accompanying constant fear of annihilation impose an immeasurable psychological cost. If deterrence does fail, the resulting human suffering could be unparalleled. There is also a cost to efforts to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons to additional states and non-state actors. Embracing nuclear deterrence encourages proliferation. By concluding that the threat of nuclear use can help states manage a variety of threats to national security and stability, proponents of nuclear deterrence invite other states to seek nuclear weapons to secure similar purported benefits.

Finally, there is the large financial cost of a nuclear deterrent. Maintaining its current arsenal of over 10,000 nuclear warheads costs the United States approximately $31 billion annually. By comparison, the combined US international diplomacy and foreign assistance budget is approximately $39bn per year.[Footnote25](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) Current plans call for the modernisation of US nuclear weapons manufacturing infrastructure and the construction of a new generation of nuclear missiles, bombers and submarines. This will cost hundreds of billions of dollars over the next 20 years. In a prolonged era of fiscal constraint, and with the benefits of nuclear weapons uncertain, this level of expenditure is unjustifiable. But perhaps the greatest cost of continued reliance by most nuclear-armed states on a strategy of nuclear deterrence is that it mischaracterises the sources of danger in today's world and distracts decision-makers from adequately preparing for the most likely future threats.

Strategic oldthink

In the realist tradition of international relations theory, all nations are independent actors trying to maximise their power and security in an anarchical world.[Footnote26](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) Nations initiate armed conflict as a means to advance or protect their interests because they calculate the benefits of using military force outweigh the risks of doing nothing in a competitive system. Proponents of nuclear deterrence argue that nuclear weapons changed the dynamics of this system by raising the stakes and uncertainties of using military force, making it less likely.[Footnote27](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402)

There are many problems with this view. Firstly, states possessing nuclear weapons have continued to use military force in situations that could have led them into conflict with other nuclear-armed nations. Nuclear weapons did not deter NATO from using force in Kosovo in the late 1990s or Russian military action in Georgia in 2008. Moreover, states without nuclear weapons have even attacked those who possess them, an outcome that flies in the face of the claims of deterrence proponents. Nuclear weapons did not deter Egypt and Syria from attacking Israel in 1973, Argentina from attacking British territory in the 1982 Falklands War or Iraq from attacking Israel during the 1991 Gulf War.

Secondly, the theory of nuclear deterrence says little about how the roles of nuclear weapons might change in an ever-evolving international system. The nature of threats to individual nations and the stability of the international system have changed dramatically since the introduction of nuclear weapons. Examples of fundamental change include the end of the Cold War and the emergence of large-scale transnational terrorism. Another, more important change is the increased degree of international security interdependence.

Such a strategy is futile

This increased interdependence is clear in the field of economics, but it has also been highlighted by advances in our scientific understanding of the interaction between the Earth's natural systems and the patterns of modern civilisation. Nothing demonstrates this more clearly than our understanding of environmental science. A nation concerned about the economic, public health and security consequences of atmospheric pollution, climate change, sea-level rise and diminishing supplies of fresh water can implement laws and policies that drastically reduce its pollution of air and water within its own borders. But such a strategy is futile, because the air above its borders and the water in its rivers and aquifers is well mixed with pollutants from surrounding nations. Only if all nations cooperate to reduce pollution can any one of them substantially benefit from the effort. The same is true for global disease pandemics and natural disasters. These security threats affect many nations simultaneously and individual national efforts to counter or address them cannot be fully effective.

The interconnectedness of the issues of nuclear deterrence and transnational environmental threats has been demonstrated by two scientists, Alan Robock and Owen Brian Toon, who used computer modelling techniques to simulate the climatic consequences of a regional nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan. Their results show that even with the detonation of nuclear weapons limited to the territories of the two combatants, the smoke and dust raised into the atmosphere by the nuclear explosions would eventually circle the globe, killing crops and temporarily cooling the planet. Robock and Toon project that nearly a billion people would die, the vast majority civilians in nations outside the warring states.[Footnote28](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) The implication of this analysis is that all countries have a direct security interest in preventing nuclear war, anywhere. It would be perfectly reasonable for the US joint chiefs of staff to advise the secretary of defense and White House that in order to protect the security of the US population, the Pentagon must have the ability to forcibly prevent nuclear war between India and Pakistan, or any other two countries. This means that no matter what the reason for the war, or who initiated hostilities, the security of the United States would demand that Indian and Pakistani nuclear weapons be destroyed in flight or preemptively attacked on the ground before they could be detonated and cause a global climatic catastrophe that would kill thousands of Americans.

The US military and much of the broader national-security community have recognised the seriousness of transnational threats such as global climate change. The US Department of Defense, for example, included climate threat as a key pillar of its most recent Quadrennial Defense Review and the CIA has established a Center for the Study of Climate Change. Despite this growing awareness, the response remains inadequate and the mechanisms for effective cooperation on transnational threats remain underdeveloped.[Footnote29](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) If we fail to slow climate change or successfully adapt to its consequences, political and military crises are likely to result.[Footnote30](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/00396338.2013.767402) Nuclear deterrence will be meaningless in these crises. Threats to use nuclear weapons will lack credibility because carrying them out would greatly worsen global environmental damage and its consequences for all states, including those who used nuclear weapons in an attempt to defend themselves or defeat their rivals.

#### There’s also ample policy ground over shifts in U.S. nuclear posture to disarmament – they access impacts like great power war, U.S. leadership, nuclear terrorism, proliferation, etc.

Perkovich 8 – Vice president for studies and director of the Nonproliferation Program at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Served as a speech writer and foreign policy adviser to Senator Joseph Biden.

George Perkovich, October 2008, “Abolishing Nuclear Weapons: Why the United States Should Lead,” Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, https://carnegieendowment.org/files/abolishing\_nuclear\_weapons.pdf

This challenge is well understood. The United States, with European backing, has undertaken national and international efforts to remove nuclear weapons materials from inadequately secured facilities around the world and to heighten security where materials are located. What is needed most in this domain is greater political will and sustained attention of high-level officials. It is tempting for working-level officials in states whose cooperation is sought by the United States to seek concessions on other issues. The next U.S. administration will have to raise these issues to the cabinet or head-of-state level, where its counterparts will not want to look indifferent or mercantile in matters of such dire consequence. A clearer commitment to the goal of nuclear disarmament would not be decisive here, but it could help. Terrorists might not be influenced, but a clearer commitment to seek conditions for the elimination of nuclear arsenals can help motivate other states to support strengthened nonproliferation rules, inspections, and controls over fissile materials. It could also strengthen popular revulsion over the use of these weapons, including by terrorists. The stronger the global effort to disavow nuclear weapons as a viable tool of statecraft and symbol of power, the greater the leverage that can be exerted on states and other actors who might facilitate terrorist acquisition or use of nuclear weapons, either by acts of commission or omission. Terrorists may not be deterrable or persuadable, but they can be impeded by the denial of sanctuary, technology, and materiel they seek from states and vendors. Eliminating the Threat of Nuclear Annihilation The end of the Cold War and the threat of U.S.–Russian nuclear war greatly reduced the specter of nuclear annihilation. Yet the continued existence of nuclear weapons and the possible diffusion of fissile materials mean that the risk of mass destruction remains. Recent studies by atmospheric scientists using advanced computer models indicate that a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan involving 50 Hiroshima-strength weapons each (less than one percent of the global arsenal and one-half of what India and Pakistan possess) could produce a nuclear winter with climate change unrecorded in human history. Belief in nuclear deterrence provides some comfort. Indeed, it is a primary source of resistance to seriously pursuing nuclear disarmament. Yet this belief is rational only insofar as one thinks that nuclear deterrence will not fail. If that thought or assumption is valid, then nuclear proliferation should not be such a concern. If additional states or terrorists acquire nuclear weapons and nuclear deterrence will not fail, then why worry? If, on the other hand, nuclear deterrence is too uncertain to protect civilization forever from the dangers of mass destruction, then the goal of creating the conditions for the secure, verifiable, and enforceable elimination of these weapons must be elevated. As long as nuclear weapons remain, deterrence will need to be managed with great care. It is indefensible to prefer an international order based heavily on threats to use nuclear weapons over an alternative in which these weapons are collectively reduced to very low numbers and salience. Fostering Optimism in U.S. Global Leadership Optimism will be difficult to cultivate in a world in which nuclear proliferation appears likely and progress toward nuclear disarmament doubtful. Since 1945, nuclear weapons have been a central symbol of the international order. The unrivalled, speedy, and destructive power of these weapons darkens imaginations. If it were possible to confine nuclear weapons to states whose stability, peacefulness, and judiciousness were widely trusted, optimism could flourish nonetheless. But this is an unlikely prospect in the near or medium term. Leaders and populations in states that could acquire nuclear weapons may not agree on which other states are trustworthy with these weapons. This is one reason why a nuclear order based on a double standard—a handful of states determined to keep nuclear weapons and also trying to prevent 185 from getting them—is inherently unstable.

### Triad

#### ICBMs are irrelevant.

Erästö 22 - (tytti erästö, Senior Researcher in the SIPRI Weapons of Mass Destruction Programme, focusing on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation issues; SIPRI Insights on Peace and Security, No. 2022/6, June 2022, "Revisiting ‘Minimal Nuclear Deterrence’: Laying The Ground For Multilateral Nuclear Disarmament," doa: 4-27-2023) url: https://www.sipri.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/sipriinsight2206\_minimal\_nuclear\_deterrence\_1.pdf

Several arms control advocates in the country have called for the removal of the land-based leg of the triad, arguing that ICBMs are not only obsolete, but also destabilizing.72 More specifically, siloed ICBMs are vulnerable to counterforce attacks due to their fixed and known locations. While hardening complicates counterforce strikes against ICBMs, an adversary could still destroy them by launching multiple nuclear weapons against one location. Siloed ICBMs have traditionally been regarded as having high deterrent value due to their level of readiness, which means that they can be launched ‘under warning’, before they are reached by incoming adversary missiles. Critics point out that it is this combination of vulnerability and high alert level that makes ICBMs particularly dangerous, which is why they should be either eliminated or significantly reduced.73 The contrary view is that ICBMs are still important for maintaining the high threshold for nuclear attack against the USA, as the task of conducting successful counterforce strikes against 450 hardened missile silos would be more daunting than a strike against the other two legs of the triad.74

#### There are solvency advocates, especially in the ICBM area. Good wonks + the movement folks (codepink) want elimination.

#### Here’s one…

Hennigan 22 (WJ, “Inside the $100 Billion Mission to Modernize America’s Aging Nuclear Missiles,” TIME, https://time.com/6212698/nuclear-missiles-icbm-triad-upgrade/)

Critics say this thinking is antiquated Cold War dogma. The thermonuclear missiles carried on submarines and long-range bombers are more than enough to dissuade hostile nations from reaching for their own nukes, they say. What’s more, they worry, ICBMs could trigger an inadvertent nuclear disaster through a faulty launch warning, an adversary’s miscalculation over U.S. intentions, or some other blunder. There were multiple near misses during the Cold War, when the annihilation of much of the human race was averted thanks only to luck or the common sense of a low-level officer. In February, the Pentagon postponed a long-planned ICBM test launch to avoid escalating tensions with Russia amid its war in Ukraine. Antinuclear groups call that kind of precarious circumstance evidence that perhaps the weapons should be scrapped altogether.

#### Elimination is the “Best Policy”

Hartung 20 (https://thehill.com/opinion/national-security/503928-its-time-to-eliminate-land-based-nuclear-missiles/)

To the extent that the possession of nuclear weapons is justified to deter an attack against the United States , that function can be fulfilled by submarine-launched ballistic missiles, which, as the UCS report notes, are “virtually undetectable and therefore invulnerable” — and therefore not subject to the need to launch them on warning of a potential attack. This provides a crucial margin of safety against a mistaken nuclear launch. The best policy would be to eliminate ICBMs altogether. But this approach will no doubt generate fierce opposition from the ICBM lobby, which includes senators from states with ICBM bases, as well as contractors like Northrop Grumman, which stand to make billions of dollars from the development and production of a new land-based missile — dubbed the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD). This lobby has had considerable success in preventing changes in ICBM policy. Among other things, the contractors and their congressional allies have been instrumental in blocking efforts to even explore alternatives to current plans for the development and deployment of new ICBMs. It’s long past time to prevent special interest pleading from blocking policies that will make us safer from a nuclear war.

#### Eliminate Bombers Advocate

Watson 17 (Strategic Studies Quarterly, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-11\_Issue-4/Watson.pdf)

For over 50 years, the structure of the US nuclear triad has remained the same. Relying on strategic bombers, intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBM), and submarine-launched ballistic missiles (SLBM), the United States has sought to deter strategic threats from a variety of sources. The current threat environment, however, is radically different from what was being considered when the triad was created. From the continued evolution of terrorism to the increasing threat of cyberattacks, both the nature of the threats facing the United States and the deterrence frameworks necessary to counter them have changed. The United States needs to critically reassess the current triad with an eye toward eliminating redundant or potentially ineffective delivery systems such as the strategic nuclear bomber.

#### Eliminating bombers strengthens deterrence

Watson 17 (Strategic Studies Quarterly, https://www.airuniversity.af.edu/Portals/10/SSQ/documents/Volume-11\_Issue-4/Watson.pdf)

The decline in the potential applicability and relative effectiveness of the strategic bomber is at the core of the current debate.4 The argument offered here is that these underlying rationales for continuing investment and development of strategic nuclear bomber forces are either outdated regarding the threat environment, ineffective due to technological advancements, or increasingly inefficient because of the relative unit cost for nuclear deterrence attained through ICBMs and SLBMs. The United States must begin to consider eliminating the strategic bomber leg of the nuclear triad to both streamline the nuclear deterrent and permit strengthening deterrence within the cyber and space domains.

## DA Links

### Assurances – NFU

#### NFU ruins allies faith in U.S. deterrence.

O’Neil 21 – Professor of Political Science at Griffith University, PhD in Political Science and M.A. in International Relations from Flinders University.

Andrew O’Neil, “A “No-First-Use” doctrine would undermine American nuclear deterrence,” The Interpreter, 01-21-2021, https://www.lowyinstitute.org/the-interpreter/no-first-use-doctrine-would-undermine-american-nuclear-deterrence

But the most disconcerting aspect of a US No-First-Use commitment is that it would raise serious questions about the credibility of US alliances. America’s allies want to lower the risks of nuclear war, but they do not want this to occur at the expense of their own security. If the Biden Administration adopts No-First-Use, it is effectively stating that US security guarantees will not include the US’s most powerful weapons, unless allies are first attacked with nuclear weapons. This is cold comfort for countries like Japan, Taiwan, and Australia all of which would have to contend with superior PLA conventional forces in the event of hostilities with China. While this does not mean that US alliances would become redundant, with the adoption of No-First-Use they would cease to provide the existential guarantee that allies have come to expect. When doubts have arisen about US commitments in the past, Taiwan, Japan, South Korea, and even Australia have toyed with their own nuclear weapons programs. There is no reason to assume they will not do so again.

It is clearly in the interests of the US and its close allies to keep Beijing, Moscow, and Pyongyang guessing about the precise threshold at which the US would consider using nuclear weapons. Calculated ambiguity is smart policy, because the more certainty adversaries have about the threshold at which certain levels of force are used, the more confident they will feel about retaining the initiative below that threshold. Does anyone seriously believe that Beijing will be any more restrained during a crisis if it is assured the US won’t resort to nuclear weapons unless China carries out a nuclear strike first?

#### NFU would confirm allies worst fears.

Chambers et al. 21 – \*Assistant Chief of Staff for Strategic Deterrence and Nuclear Integration for the U.S. Air Force; \*\*Researcher at the Institute for Defense Analyses, former Stanton Nuclear Security Fellow at the RAND Corporation, PhD in Public Affairs from Princeton University; \*\*\*Assistant Director of the Institute for Defense Analyses, PhD in Physics from Michigan State University; \*\*\*\*Director of the Project on Nuclear Issues and a Senior Fellow in the International Security Program at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, former Visiting Fellow at the Project on Managing the Atom in the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs at Harvard University, PhD in War Studies from King’s College London, M.A. in Security Policy Studies from the George Washington University.

\*William A. Chambers, \*\*Caroline R. Milne, \*\*\*Rhiannon T. Hutton, and \*\*\*\*Heather W. Williams, “No-First Use of Nuclear Weapons: A Policy Assessment,” Institute for Defense Analyses, 01-xx-2021, https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/n/no/no-first-use-of-nuclear-weapons-a-policy-assessment/p-20513.ashx

A. Likely Allied Reactions to NFU

Widespread perceptions of a deteriorating international security environment, combined with waning or low confidence in the credibility of U.S. extended deterrence suggest the allies, are unlikely to perceive NFU as beneficial or useful policy. U.S. adoption of NFU could be interpreted as further erosion of the U.S. security guarantee and as a signal that the United States is deliberately limiting its obligations to allies. That said, the allies are not a monolith, and the degree of disapproval would vary from extreme to moderate to low. Despite domestic pressures to demonstrate progress toward nuclear disarmament in many NATO states, European allies—but more markedly those in Eastern Europe—would be largely opposed. In the Asia-Pacific, Japan appears to remain in firmest opposition to such a shift, but NFU would exacerbate overall concerns about the U.S.’ ability to counter China’s aggressive behavior and North Korea’s unpredictability and would intensify existing doubts in the region about the U.S. willingness to intervene on behalf of an ally.

The other two nuclear-armed countries in NATO, France and the United Kingdom, are particularly sympathetic to strategic ambiguity. They have similar policies but rely on substantially smaller and less diverse nuclear arsenals. During the development of the 2010 NPR, one reason for rejecting NFU was the desire to remain aligned with these two allies, who were not prepared to adopt NFU or support U.S. adoption of NFU. An NFU pronouncement would have put the United States at odds with the policy of the British, the French, and NATO, all of which have long stood by a policy of calculated ambiguity.61 Since there is no indication that the British and French stances have changed, such a discontinuity could reinforce Russia’s expected objectives—disarray among Western allies— in the midst of a burgeoning crisis, perhaps increasing Russian leaders’ willingness to take risk.

Fundamental to this likely reaction is recognition of increasingly challenging and dangerous regional security trends.62 Allies are concerned by the development or refinement of concepts, capabilities, and doctrines by nuclear-armed potential adversaries like Russia, China, and North Korea that may threaten the U.S. ability to intervene decisively in a local contingency. NATO/European allies are particularly uneasy about Russia’s reliance on non-strategic nuclear weapons (NSNW) and dual-capable systems in times of crisis. There are concerns that Russia, in particular, sees limited nuclear first use as a means to control escalation and that allies may perceive a deterrence “gap” in this regard. Challenges in the Asia-Pacific are motivated by the expansion of Chinese anti access/area denial (A2/AD) capability, including counter-stealth technology together with medium range missiles that can target Guam, and by a consistently provocative and unpredictable nuclear North Korea.63 Allies see these developments as bolstering the adversary’s position in the regional balance of power. While short or no-notice nuclear attacks are viewed as unlikely, “deterrence gaps” are believed to loom over a future crisis or conflict. Threats of limited nuclear use by the adversary could force the United States and its allies to capitulate or back down.64 Against this backdrop, the constraints that NFU may place on the United States are at odds with the direction in which adversaries are moving from the allied perspective.

Similarly, dissatisfaction with the array of available and prospective conventional options for allies to manage the risks of escalation in this environment will circumscribe allied views about the potential advantages of an NFU policy. IDA found consistently that allies place high value on their relationship with the United States and consider the U.S. security guarantee critical. Yet, across the board, allies in Europe and the Asia-Pacific are worried about the fading (or loss) of the U.S. conventional advantage vis-à-vis Russia— and especially China.65 Multiple interview participants observed that Japan and South Korea are in the same position regarding China as NATO was during the Cold War regarding the Soviet Union, underscoring the imperative of a declaratory policy based on strategic ambiguity. Aside from quantitative differences in regional strike capabilities, allies are also tracking the relative U.S. inability to operate forces across domains. China, and increasingly Russia, is seen as better integrated. 66 The ability of the United States to redress any conventional imbalance—and position itself to do so in a sustainable way over the long term—will thus likely endure as a key challenge for NFU proponents.

An NFU policy would also likely call into question the credibility of U.S. extended nuclear deterrence at a point when allied confidence in that relationship is shaken. Even with disarmament debates ongoing in many European countries, NATO members perceive a troubling gap in the deterrent balance with Russia that NFU might exacerbate. Maintaining the capability for first use was seen as especially important in the Asia-Pacific, where the extended deterrence architecture is seen as “undercapitalized” and “neglected.” Without a nuclear-sharing arrangement or permanent regional presence, U.S. extended nuclear deterrence capabilities in Asia may be seen as little more than a “possibility that they will be deployed as a contingency or during a crisis in the Asia-Pacific region.”67 NFU could undermine that promise even further.

### Assurances – ICBMs

#### ICBMs are key to both European and Asian allies’ security and assurances.

Dodge 21 – Research Scholar at the National Institute for Public Policy, PhD in Political Science from George Mason University, M.S. in Defense and Security Studies from Missouri State University.

Michaela Dodge, “Michaela Dodge, ICBMs and Their Importance for Allied Assurances and Security,” National Institute for Public Policy, 01-12-2021, https://nipp.org/information\_series/dodge-michaela-icbms-and-their-importance-for-allied-assurances-and-security-information-series-no-475-2/

Since the development of U.S. intercontinental-range ballistic missiles (ICBMs), every U.S. administration—both Republican and Democratic—has considered them indispensable to U.S. national security. However, ICBMs are important not only for deterrence, but to allied security as well.

The United States extends its nuclear security guarantees to more than 30 countries, including allies in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). Other countries like Japan and South Korea, which rely on the so-called “nuclear umbrella” for their security, have nuclear-armed adversaries in their vicinity. In the past, U.S. nuclear guarantees have allowed allies to forego their own nuclear weapons programs, even though many have the technological know-how and access to nuclear materials to build them if they decided to do so. They have refrained from doing so in large part due to their confidence in U.S. nuclear guarantees, and that important role for U.S. nuclear weapons continues today.

Strategic Systems and Allied Assurances

Extending deterrence and assuring allies and partners are primary objectives of U.S. nuclear force posture, as stated in the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review (NPR).[1] In the context of NATO, the 2018 NPR states “The United States will make available its strategic nuclear forces, and commit nuclear weapons forward-deployed to Europe, to the defense of NATO. These forces provide an essential political and military link between Europe and North America and are the supreme guarantee of Alliance security.”[2] The dependence of Asian allies on U.S. strategic nuclear capabilities is even more apparent because the United States does not forward deploy any nuclear warheads on allied territories in that region: “the United States currently relies almost exclusively on its strategic nuclear capabilities for nuclear deterrence and the assurance of allies in the region.”[3]

Allies appreciate the link between U.S. strategic nuclear weapons and nuclear assurance. When visiting U.S. Strategic Command in April 2018, Jens Stoltenberg, NATO Secretary General, stated “we have to make sure that NATO continues to have credible and strong deterrence. And of course nuclear forces is a[n] absolutely necessary part of a credible deterrence from the Alliance.”[4] Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono issued a statement upon the release of the 2018 NPR that “Japan highly appreciates the latest NPR which clearly articulates the U.S. resolve to ensure the effectiveness of its deterrence.”[5] In the past, a Dutch official even went as far as to suggest that NATO ought to rely more heavily on U.S. strategic systems rather than develop a new dual-capable aircraft.[6]

The importance of U.S. strategic nuclear weapons for extended deterrence and allied assurance was also recognized by the bipartisan congressionally mandated Strategic Posture Commission Report in 2009. The Commission noted that requirements for extended deterrence in Europe and Asia are “evolving,” implying the need for a degree of flexibility in a way that the United States postures its nuclear forces.[7] The Commission also noted that allied “assurance that extended deterrence remains credible and effective may require that the United States retain numbers or types of nuclear capabilities that it might not deem necessary if it were concerned only with its own defense.”[8] The nuclear triad, including its ICBM leg, provides such flexibility, and linking U.S. strategic forces with U.S. nuclear assurances has been U.S. policy for decades. Even though ICBMs do not have the signaling potency and physical visibility of other U.S. delivery systems, particularly long-range nuclear-armed bombers and dual-capable aircraft, they create important synergies that contribute to deterrence.

Since ICBMs are dispersed over large swaths of U.S. territory, an adversary would have to spend hundreds of nuclear warheads in a direct attack on the U.S. homeland to destroy them. This reality—enforced by the U.S. deployment of ICBMs—likely serves to frustrate any nuclear attack planning against the United States. By bolstering deterrence of attacks on the U.S. homeland, ICBMs enhance the credibility of U.S. security guarantees to allies, as the United States is more likely to come to the defense of others when the risks to its own territory are minimized. Without ICBMs, adversaries could concentrate their attack on just three bomber bases and two submarine bases on U.S. territory, leaving submarines at sea as the only strategic system available for retaliation. Such a limited homeland attack would be well within the reach of other nuclear powers. And, without ICBMs, adversaries could then concentrate their resources and focus on countering U.S. submarines at sea. Moreover, without ICBMs, adversaries would have more warheads available to cause damage to U.S. cities.

Unlike ICBMs, other nuclear delivery systems can be destroyed by conventional weapons, notwithstanding the fact that an adversary would have a difficult time finding U.S. strategic submarines, at least for the foreseeable future. The vulnerability of these systems to conventional weapons could result in a substantive ambiguity as to the intentions of an adversary should a nuclear aircraft or a strategic submarine be lost to a conventional attack. Bombers and dual-capable aircraft flying conventional missions add to the complexity of this problem. No such ambiguity is plausible when an adversary chooses to destroy ICBMs.

#### It would ruin all future arms control with adversaries and crush allied confidence --- empirics.

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Michaela Dodge, “Michaela Dodge, ICBMs and Their Importance for Allied Assurances and Security,” National Institute for Public Policy, 01-12-2021, https://nipp.org/information\_series/dodge-michaela-icbms-and-their-importance-for-allied-assurances-and-security-information-series-no-475-2/

A unilateral elimination of U.S. ICBMs would cost the United States leverage in any future arms control process. Unilateral U.S. nuclear reductions have often gone unreciprocated. The 1990s Presidential Nuclear Initiatives (PNIs) are instructive. PNIs were a series of reciprocal political commitments between the United States and the Soviet Union to withdraw from operational deployment and eliminate various short-range nuclear weapons.

While the United States delivered on its PNI pledges, Russia did not follow suit. The result is at least a 10:1 advantage in short-range nuclear weapons in Russia’s favor in the European theater. Russia’s battlefield weapons directly threaten U.S. forward-deployed forces and allies. Russia has no incentive to give up its superiority in non-strategic nuclear forces, particularly given NATO’s conventional advantage. If meaningful reductions in this class of weaponry were possible at all, Russia would likely propose trade-offs that would significantly hamper U.S. and allied security and be therefore unacceptable to the United States and NATO. For example, Russia could ask the United States to dismantle components of its missile defense system in Europe in return for nominal reductions in Russia’s tactical nuclear forces that would not significantly diminish Moscow’s clear advantage.

Conclusion

Allies perceive changes to U.S. nuclear weapons posture in the broad context of overall U.S. defense policy. These changes are more than just a sum of their operational implications. While allied assurances require a lot more than modernization of a single nuclear weapons delivery system, U.S. unilateral elimination of the ICBM leg of the triad is unwise at this time and for the foreseeable future. It would leave adversaries free to exploit coercive advantages, eliminate U.S. leverage for arms control negotiations, place greater stress on the other elements of the Triad that may not be available for allied defense, elicit doubts on the part of U.S. allies about the credibility of U.S. commitments to their security, and encourage others to seek nuclear weapons as a result—a course of action that could be potentially fatal for the nonproliferation regime the United States has championed for decades.

In the face of pressures on the incoming Biden Administration to eliminate the ICBM leg of the U.S. strategic Triad, such a move would be dangerously destabilizing to allies who rely on the U.S. nuclear umbrella for their ultimate security. Unless we want to face a more unpredictable world with yet more nuclear players, it is critical that U.S. allies remain convinced of credibility of U.S. nuclear assurances. ICBMs are an integral part of that credibility.

### Deterrence – NFU

#### Adversaries would become emboldened.

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Taehwa Hong, “The Case Against the No First Use Policy,” The Stanford Review, 01-26-2022, https://stanfordreview.org/the-case-against-the-no-first-use-policy/

The US must reject NFU and continue to maintain a first-use option for nuclear weapons; the rationale for keeping the first-use option remains clear and relevant. America’s nuclear weapons help allies deter conventional aggression by their much more powerful adversaries. During the Cold War, Washington’s strategic ambiguity over first-use was intended to prevent Soviet and Chinese tanks from rolling across Europe and Asia. NATO has steadfastly opposed NFU since it adopted “Flexible Response” in 1967. South Korea and Japan relinquished nuclear weapons development trusting America’s nuclear umbrella—the coverage of the umbrella, until now, was assumed to include conventional invasion.

In the era of Great Power Competition with Beijing and Moscow, the situation is not so different. Nuclear weapons’ greatest strength comes from the deterrence they entail, not their physical impact on a battlefield. Keeping the first-use option deters the outbreak of a conventional war, the devastating impact of which would not be justified by the mere fact that nuclear weapons were not deployed.

Granted, some argue that the prospect of a US first-strike could force the aggressor to escalate the conflict, which otherwise would have remained conventional, into a nuclear war. However, in such a drastic scenario, what difference would it make whether the United States uses nuclear weapons first, or waits for the enemy’s nuclear attack before delivering its own? Deterrence comes first. Previous US administrations, Democrats and Republicans, all opted for strategic ambiguity for that reason.

My country, South Korea, is under constant threat from North Korea’s nuclear, chemical, biological and conventional weapons. The strongest deterrence against all types of war is the unwavering pledge that North Korean aggression will be met with the end of the North Korean regime, by all means possible including a nuclear strike. Strategic ambiguity ironically grants a sense of certainty by deterring an enemy that fears obliteration. The US limits South Korea’s uranium enrichment; it also holds wartime operational control of the US-ROK allied forces. Many South Koreans do not dispute these temporary holds on our national sovereignty as they are inevitable compromises for an ironclad alliance. But we do expect reciprocity when it comes to extended deterrence.

The same goes for Japan. Tokyo renounced the right to go to war after WWII, and has shied away from developing full-fledged offensive capabilities. How can America request that Japan step up its security role in the Indo-Pacific, if it is planning to partially fold its nuclear umbrella? How would European countries react to American NFU when the Russians are developing hypersonic missiles, which can carry both nuclear and conventional warheads? What about America’s Middle Eastern partners which live under the threat of Iranian aggression?

I am not claiming that Washington should change nuclear policy just to align with Korean interests. South Korea is not the center of the world. Indeed, US nuclear policy should align with the American Grand Strategy—but that’s precisely why America should not declare NFU. As President Biden himself has repeatedly asserted, alliance management is at the core of the US Grand Strategy. In an international security environment where America is no longer the omnipresent “global policeman,” abandonment remains a chief concern for US allies whose security depends on Washington’s commitments. US allies, especially those who suspect they are not on the priority theater in the Great Power Competition, fear abandonment more than entrapment into unwanted conflicts with America’s adversaries. Even if the US seeks to reassure them by detaching the broader collective security commitments from NFU, the fear will simply aggravate.

I appreciate the noble cause behind NFU. President Obama also sought it, only to face protests from allies and his own cabinet members. NFU was part of a broader “Nuclear Free World” initiative, accompanied by calls for nuclear arms control and the first visit to Hiroshima by an American president. With the US spearheading such discussions, President Obama hoped to herald an era of a “Nuclear Free World.” Perhaps President Biden shares his aspirations, and for good reason. In an ideal world, we would not have to worry about a nuclear apocalypse, which will always remain a possibility as long as the nine nuclear powers reject wholesale denuclearization.

#### It’s too large of a change too quickly.

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\*Ankit Panda and \*\*Vipin Narang, “Sole Purpose is Not No First Use: Nuclear Weapons and Their Declaratory Policy,” War on the Rocks, 02-22-2021, https://warontherocks.com/2021/02/sole-purpose-is-not-no-first-use-nuclear-weapons-and-declaratory-policy/

Detractors of a no-first-use policy in the United States argue that without drastic changes to American nuclear posture or alert levels to preclude at least rapid first use to make such a pledge credible — such as separating warheads from intercontinental ballistic missiles, as China is believed to do, or eliminating them altogether because they can be launched so promptly — the costs significantly outweigh the benefits. The military strongly opposes those changes, however, since they may reduce the overall survivability of U.S. nuclear forces. Furthermore, absent these practical changes to force posture — or even with them, for that matter — U.S. adversaries would never believe a no-first-use pledge because nothing would physically prevent the United States from violating it in a crisis or conflict.

Meanwhile, American allies might find such a declaration too credible. For allies, such as Japan, the fear that the United States may abandon them at the most crucial moment and fail to use nuclear weapons to defend them may drive them to develop their own nuclear weapons, as detractors often note. Allied fears have intensified in recent years in Northeast Asia in particular, where rapid advances in North Korea’s nuclear capabilities have introduced the Cold War specter of “decoupling” to the U.S. alliances with both South Korea and Japan. Furthermore, for Japan if not South Korea, the prospect of U.S. nuclear use to deter large-scale Chinese conventional aggression is a crucial pillar of its security strategy. They have therefore strongly opposed any movement toward an American no-first-use declaration. A no-first-use pledge may similarly cause concern in European capitals that Moscow would have a free hand to use overwhelming conventional force against them. A final argument against a strict no-first-use policy is that it would require the United States or its allies to suffer a nuclear attack — and countless fatalities — before retaliation. The risk of a no-first-use declaration, opponents therefore argue, is that not only would it fail to generate crisis stability against adversaries and incentivize allies to seek their own nuclear weapons, but that it is also immoral — even if U.S. retaliation against any aggressor were assured. Even if there are very few scenarios at present where the United States would ever contemplate using nuclear weapons first, skeptics of no-first-use argue that some scenarios do exist even today, and that others may arise in the future.

In short, U.S. adoption of a no-first-use pledge in the near term would likely be highly controversial.

#### There’s only a risk that an NFU is net-worse for deterrence.

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\*William A. Chambers, \*\*Caroline R. Milne, \*\*\*Rhiannon T. Hutton, and \*\*\*\*Heather W. Williams, “No-First Use of Nuclear Weapons: A Policy Assessment,” Institute for Defense Analyses, 01-xx-2021, https://www.ida.org/-/media/feature/publications/n/no/no-first-use-of-nuclear-weapons-a-policy-assessment/p-20513.ashx

The opposing view posits that NFU will create additional risk elsewhere, ultimately making the United States worse off.73 Adversaries will interpret NFU as evidence that a major conventional, cyber, chemical, or biological attack against the United States or its allies will not induce a nuclear response.74 As an invitation to act with relative impunity, NFU would embolden U.S. adversaries and possibly make conventional conflict between nuclear-armed states more likely. 75 This concern is often expressed by U.S. allies in the Asia-Pacific, who worry that NFU will encourage China to behave more aggressively at the non-nuclear level.

The truth about the relationship between NFU and miscalculation—be it discouraging, conducive, or trivial—cannot be captured precisely. The risk of miscalculation can never be driven to zero, and only history will determine whether a decision-maker’s risk tolerance was correct. Furthermore, given the closely held nature of adversary perceptions on matters related to nuclear weapons, an unclassified attempt to answer such a question will be characterized by uncertainty.76 That said, the open-source literature offers an authoritative and empirically driven foundation for how potential adversaries like Russia and China perceive the credibility of an NFU pronouncement by the United States. Their interpretation will go far in determining the policy’s ultimate impact, if any, on the risk of miscalculation in a crisis.77

From the vantage point of Moscow or Beijing, how clearly would NFU signal U.S. intent about the circumstances under which it would consider employing nuclear weapons? In other words, to what extent could they rely on an NFU policy as a predictor of U.S. behavior? Consider how CDRUSSTRATCOM describes his framework for posturing U.S. nuclear forces in light of China’s NFU policy: “It’s my responsibility to make sure that I have thought through what we have to do to deter what they’re capable of doing as opposed o what they say they’re going to do.”78 Applying this perspective forward and drawing on existing and recent scholarship, it is reasonable to suppose potential U.S. adversaries will form an assessment of NFU’s credibility based on much more than the content of the policy declaration itself.79 As a statement of intent, and a quickly reversible one at that, declaratory policy may not necessarily guide decision making in a crisis-to-conflict transition or during active hostilities. Perceptions of the credibility of an NFU pledge thus combine with a host of other factors, including U.S. capabilities, doctrine, and operational war plans, to be important.80

### Deterrence – ICBMs

#### Eliminating ICBMs would be extremely destabilizing.

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\*Frank Rose and \*\*Benjamin Bahney, “Reassuring Allies and Strengthening Strategic Stability: An Approach to Nuclear Modernization for Democrats,” War on the Rocks, 04-16-2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/04/reassuring-allies-and-strengthening-strategic-stability-an-approach-to-nuclear-modernization-for-democrats/

Some experts, including some prominent Democrats, have called for eliminating the U.S. ICBM force, arguing that it is militarily unnecessary and inherently destabilizing. However, we believe that Democrats should support moving forward with a replacement to the existing Minuteman III ICBM. First, a substantial ICBM force means that adversaries looking to significantly degrade U.S. nuclear weapons capabilities must strike deep and wide across the United States, thereby assuring they will provoke an overwhelming U.S. military response. Second, ICBMs provide the capability to hold at risk targets around the world on very short notice. And third, the ICBM force provides a hedge against technological risk, in case U.S. adversaries develop the capability to find and promptly target ballistic missile submarines.

While the SSBN force is currently undetectable, the 2018 Nuclear Posture Review notes that United States will need to “continue to hedge against the possibility that advances in anti-submarine warfare could make the SSBN force less survivable in the future.” China’s investments in artificial intelligence and space and airborne reconnaissance present risks, though difficult to measure, as does their development of an “underwater Great Wall” sensor network. All provide a compelling rationale for a land-based deterrent, like the the Ground Based Strategic Deterrent program, as a hedge against future risks to the submarine force.

#### ICBMs are a key a part of U.S. extended deterrence.

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Peter Huessey, “Deterrence Assurance: The True Value of the Nuclear Triad,” The National Interest, 06-27-2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/deterrence-assurance-true-value-nuclear-triad-188543?page=0%2C1

Can America solve this problem by getting rid of ICBMs? Von Hippel notes that Dr. William Perry, a former secretary of defense, has called for the termination of all ICBM programs, including getting rid of the current Minuteman force.

However, ICBMs have real-world value. As President John Kennedy underscored, having the Minuteman ICBMs first on alert the very day the United States discovered the Soviet Union placed their own nuclear-armed missiles in Cuba, was his “ace in the hole” that ended the Cuban missile crisis without armed conflict and Armageddon.

Despite numerous subsequent crises between the United States and the Soviet Union or between the United States and Russia, no U.S. president has ordered the launch of an ICBM or submarine-launched ballistic missile in the seventy million minutes such weapons have been on alert since October 1962.

What is at the core of von Hippel’s worry is not that the United States will launch its missile prematurely in a crisis. His concern appears to be two-fold. He believes the United States should not have a policy of holding at risk its enemy’s nuclear forces by targeting them, which is known as a counterforce strategy. He is also concerned that nuclear weapons cannot really be used to terminate or “win” a conflict.

Both views require the United States to believe the Russians and Chinese, among its nuclear-armed adversaries, have the same view of human life and the use of nuclear weapons as the United States. The assumption is that deterrence of Russia and China simply requires the United States to have the ability—even delayed by many months—to blow up Russian and Chinese cities.

The assumption von Hippel makes is that the U.S. nuclear weapons strategy need not hold at risk the other guy’s military capability, as America’s enemies are assumed to value their people more than they do their weapons. Irrespective of their goal of being the world’s hegemon or bully, by brandishing their nuclear capability to “rule the roost.”

What are the facts? The Russians and the Chinese see nuclear weapons as their ticket to get the United States to stand down in a crisis, and let aggression succeed. As top nuclear professionals Professor Stephen Blank and Dr. Mark Schneider together outlined in detail speaking at a Mitchell Institute seminar in September 2020, that is what the Russians and increasingly the Chinese, see as the prime value of the nuclear weapons they possess—a coercive power to win conflicts or crises without having to fire a shot at the United States.

And a corollary to von Hippel’s objection to holding at risk the weaponry of the “bad guys” is the further assumption as the late Bruce Blair called for in House Armed Services Committee testimony in 2019, that the U.S. response to a nuclear attack need not be nuclear but indeed conventional, even if the United States is attacked multiple times with nuclear weapons. In this view, a U.S. nuclear response that attacks the bad guys’ weaponry is not needed. As Blair asserted, he did not want to be the first country to break the moral taboo against using nuclear weapons.

Von Hippel’s analysis also suffers from other severe deficiencies. He assumes the likely attack by the Russians, for example, is an all-out nuclear attack on the United States, seeking to pre-emptively disarm America of its forces based in the continental United States. Under that scenario, a U.S. retaliatory launch if undertaken only after warning of an attack, might be hitting empty Russian silos and port facilities and airfields. In von Hippel’s view, holding at risk Russian military capability gives Russia an incentive to also launch quickly in a crisis, causing grave instabilities

But how ironic that von Hippel himself rules out such an all-out Russian missile launch as the least likely Russian response in a crisis. And he repeatedly and accurately notes that no matter the extent of the Russian attack, U.S. survivable submarines can retaliate with a massive attack fully capable of taking down remaining Russian military assets.

But nevertheless, von Hippel’s fear is still based almost solely on the possible U.S. response to a highly irrational, unlikely, and suicidal all-out massive Russian attack.

That is why the Russians and the Chinese talk about using nuclear weapons “early but not often” and use limited strikes to get the United States to stand down and surrender, under a policy of “escalate to win”—to win the escalation dominance game in a serious game of high stakes nuclear poker.

Here is where a launch on warning posture for the United States does not even come into play. The U.S. ICBMs, in this case, would be fully survivable and a prime capability to hold at risk the Russian reserve second strike ICBM forces. Which deprives the Russians of a sanctuary from which to attack America.

Von Hippel displayed a map where hundreds of Russian targets were hit with over twelve hundred U.S. warheads as an initial strike on the Russian Federation. Von Hippel assumes U.S. missiles are postured only for first strikes against America’s enemies. But even if that were the case, which it is not, there is not anywhere near such a number of warheads on alert in the U.S. arsenal capable of hitting Russia with over twelve hundred warheads from a day-to-day normal alert posture.

In short, if Russia launches an all-out attack on the United States, then America has a secure retaliatory force that would eliminate what remains of Russian military power so as to render such power extinct. If a Russian attack is limited, then the U.S. ICBM response is credible after knowing with no doubt the United States or its allies have been attacked.

As former Secretary of Defense Frank Carlucci told Congress in January 1989, the “United States does not rely on its capability for launch on waring or launch under attack to ensure the credibility of our deterrent. The ability to carry out such options complicates Soviet assessments of war outcomes and enhances deterrence,” according to the fiscal year 1989 Annual Report to the Congress.

However, reducing nuclear warheads to the point where the president’s options are limited to counter population targets only weakens the credibility of our extended deterrent commitments to say nothing of the immoral nature (and long rejected) of such a strategy.

#### All aspects of the nuclear deterrent would be put at risk.

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Peter Huessey, “Deterrence Assurance: The True Value of the Nuclear Triad,” The National Interest, 06-27-2021, https://nationalinterest.org/feature/deterrence-assurance-true-value-nuclear-triad-188543?page=0%2C1

And under such a scenario, without ICBMs, stability cannot be preserved. A continental United States-based force of twelve submarines and sixty bombers could be taken out by destroying five soft bases—three bomber facilities and two submarine facilities. Then, an anti-submarine warfare breakthrough could put America’s remaining four to eight submarines at sea in the patrol box area or in transit, at risk. Thus, this would place the entire U.S. deterrent—all of nine to twelve (versus over five hundred today), discrete targets—at risk.

The elimination of which would put the United States out of the nuclear deterrent business. As a number of senior U.S. nuclear officials both military and civilian have explained, how is giving a country like North Korea the potential ability to put the United States out of the nuclear business stabilizing? And given the obvious objective, every Russian and Chinese technician and scientist would devote their time to finding the new coin of the realm—an anti-submarine warfare capability able to find America’s boomers at sea.