

Asia-Pacific former leaders encourage U.S. to adopt “No First Use” nuclear policy

The Obama administration is [reportedly](#) considering how to re-energize the nuclear arms control agenda in the endgame of his presidency. One significant initiative that has been flagged is a No First Use policy whereby the U.S. would commit itself not to be the first to use nuclear weapons in any circumstances.

We would welcome this significant change in the longstanding US nuclear strategy as President Obama’s vision of a nuclear-weapon-free world has made little visible progress.

President Obama entered office with a strong commitment to the nuclear policy agenda. His first major foreign policy [speech in Prague in 2009](#) articulated a powerful vision of a world free of the threat of nuclear weapons. His achievements as president include the New START treaty with Russia, four Nuclear Security Summits, the deal to ensure that Iran’s nuclear program is peaceful, and a historic visit to Hiroshima in May.

The bold agenda has stalled.

A No First Use policy would have both symbolic value and significant practical implications. Its potential benefits greatly exceed possible downsides. It would encourage a shift away from high risk doctrines and weapons deployments. A No First Use policy would avoid the need for forward deployment, launch-on-warning postures, and pre-delegation of authority to battlefield commanders, significantly dampening the prospects of accidental and unauthorized use. It would also speak to the world’s growing humanitarian concerns on nuclear weapons.

If, following the U.S. example, No First Use were adopted by all nuclear armed states, the policy could become the centrepiece of a global nuclear restraint regime, strengthen strategic stability, mute crisis instability, solidify the boundary between nuclear and conventional weapons, and further entrench the norm against the use of nuclear weapons.

President Obama has rightly [noted](#) that “As the only nation ever to use nuclear weapons,” the U.S. “has a moral obligation to continue to lead the way in eliminating them.” Increased confidence following a No First Use convention would reduce tensions between nuclear-armed states and contribute to a climate conducive to further progress on nuclear disarmament.

We strongly encourage a U.S. No First Use policy and call on America’s Asia-Pacific allies to support it.

Signed



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