

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.

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Signed



Chung-in Moon, Co-Convenor



Ramesh Thakur, Co-Convenor



Nobuyasu **Abe**, Commissioner of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs

Hasmy **Agam**, Chairman of the Malaysian Commission of Human Rights, former Ambassador to the United Nations

Myung-bok **Bae**, Editorial Writer, JoongAng Ilbo, Republic of Korea

Jim **Bolger**, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

John **Carlson**, former Director General of the Australian Safeguards and Non-Proliferation Office

Simon **Chesterman**, Dean of Law, National University of Singapore

Yungwoo **Chun**, former Senior Secretary to the President of the Republic of Korea for Foreign Affairs & National Security

Cui Liru, Senior Fellow, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations

Jayantha **Dhanapala**, former UN Under-Secretary General for Disarmament Affairs

Gareth **Evans**, Chancellor, Australian National University and former Foreign Minister of Australia

Fan Jishe, Director for Strategic Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, Beijing

Trevor **Findlay**, University of Melbourne and Member of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament

Marianne **Hanson**, University of Queensland

Peter **Hayes**, Director, Nautilus Institute

Pervez **Hoodbhoy**, Professor of Nuclear Physics and Member of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Disarmament

Yongsoo **Hwang**, Director General, Korea Institute of Nuclear Nonproliferation and Control

Jehangir **Karamat**, former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff and Chief of Army Staff, Pakistan

Yoriko **Kawaguchi**, former Foreign Minister of Japan

Sung-hwan **Kim**, former Foreign Minister of the Republic of Korea

Hong-koo **Lee**, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea

Kishore **Mahubani**, Dean, Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy, National University of Singapore, and former Permanent Representative of Singapore to the United Nations

Lalit **Mansingh**, former Foreign Secretary, High Commissioner to the UK, and Ambassador to the USA

C. Raja **Mohan**, Head Carnegie India

Ton Nu Thi **Ninh**, President, Tri Viet International University and former Ambassador of Vietnam to the European Union

Nyamosor Tuya, former Foreign Minister of Mongolia

HMGS **Palihakkara**, former Foreign Secretary and former Governor of Northern Prov., Sri Lanka

Sir Geoffrey **Palmer**, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

David **Pine**, former New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia

Kasit **Piromya**, former Foreign Minister of Thailand



Surin **Pitsuwan**, former ASEAN Secretary-General and Foreign Minister of Thailand

R. **Rajaraman**, Emeritus Professor of Theoretical Physics, Jawaharlal Nehru University

Manpreet **Sethi**, Centre for Air Power Studies, New Delhi

Shen Dingli, Associate Dean, Institute of International Studies, Fudan University, Shanghai

Minsoon **Song**, former Minister of Foreign Affairs and President, University of North Korean Studies

Rakesh **Sood**, former Special Envoy of India's Prime Minister for Nuclear Non-Proliferation

Carlos **Sorreta**, Ambassador of the Philippines to Russia

Tatsujiro **Suzuki**, Director, Research Center for Nuclear Weapons Abolition, Nagasaki University

John **Tilemann**, Research Director of Asia-Pacific Leadership Network

Shashi **Tyagi**, former Chief of the Indian Air Force

Siddharth **Varadarajan**, Editor, The Wire (India)

Arun **Vishwanathan**, National Institute of Advanced Studies, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore

Wiryono **Sastrohandoyo**, former Indonesian ambassador to Australia

Hee-ryong **Won**, Governor, Jeju Special Self-Governing Province, Republic of Korea

Angela **Woodward**, University of Canterbury, New Zealand

Hidehiko **Yuzaki**, Governor of Hiroshima Prefecture